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Recovering river landscape
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**HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE RIVER PO:
PRESERVATION OF MEMORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL USE**

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Traccia a. *Conservazione e trasformazione dei paesaggi 'mobili'*.

Parole chiave: river landscape, conservation, enhancement

The course of the river Po, from its spring to its delta in the Adriatic Sea, has been the subject of interest since the early years in which the newly-born Italian State began to localize natural elements of particular interest within its territory. These, defined "national landscapes", were considered worthy of protection.

In particular, the stretch of the most important Italian river from the spring of Monviso to the entrance in the Po Valley aroused interest not only for its naturalistic importance but also for its usage value and the memory value.

The acknowledgment of the usage value led to a proposal to make it navigable, so as to connect the Adriatic Sea with the Ligurian Sea by also exploiting the stretch of its course already navigable and a series of canals.

This had to be achieved through a infrastructural system that should have led its waters up to Savona.

The proposed model referred to the *Canal du Midi*, in France, that even today connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea.

The memory value was acknowledged and promoted thanks to Benedetto Croce who proposed to bring to light the role that the Po had had in history as a scenery for important events and because of the descriptions or narrations by artists, writers and travelers. This allowed a constant monitoring and maintenance of its banks since the early years of the twentieth century, but also prevented it from becoming a scenery of building speculations in the subsequent years of the post-war reconstruction.

But do the recent actions of protection (which have affected its main stretches, especially in Piemonte) respect the spirit of these old documents? Are they based on their reading and critical analysis?

Do the current strategies of conservation and enhancement show that, in addition to its role as a major waterway, the Po has always played an important role in the historical memory of the community?

The paper proposes some strategies that, in compliance with the requirements of the contemporary world, suggest a more accurate historical, anthropological, literary analysis of the river Po and the use of its banks for sport events and cultural exhibitions.

This should be achieved also through an enhancement of the cultural characteristics that the river still owns, and the conservation and renovation of historic buildings still located along its banks as witnesses of important events (the national expositions, the events for the centenary of the *Unità d'Italia*, the various sports events) that they have hosted. The need for this strategy of enhancement is witnessed by the fact that, in recent years, the interest toward the Po as a scenario for such events has significantly decreased. Indeed, recent events with national or international resonance, like the Winter Olympic Games of 2006, the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy or the "Giochi della Gioventù" actively involved Torino, but were preferentially located in other places in the city.

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